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THE
REASONABLENESS

Of Assenting to the

Mysteries of Christianity

Asserted and Vindicated. K

With some

REMARKS

Upon a BOOK Entitul'd,

*An Essay concerning the Use of
Reason in Propositions, the Evi-
dence whereof depends upon Hu-
man Testimony.*

In a Letter to a Friend.

LONDON,

Printed for JOHN WYAT, at the Rose in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCCVIII.

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Of attending to the

Mysteries of Christianity

Alleged and Vindicated

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THE REASONABLENESS

Of Assenting to the

Mysteries of Christianity

Asserted and Vindicated, &c.

S I R,

TO Write in Defense of the *Mysteries* of *Christianity* at a time when Human Reason, in the Eyes of some Men, has brought it self to so great a Degree of Perfection as to be able strictly to demonstrate the Absurdity of *believing* what is *above* our *Comprehension*; in a Country where those who reject *Mysteries* appear very numerous, and have made it their Business for a considerable time to tell the World that the *Clergy*, and those who defend *Mysteries*, are either *Knaves* or *Fools*; either Men of *Oscitancy* and *Ignorance*, who take up *Doctrines* upon *Trust* because they were in vogue with their illiterate *Fore-fathers*; or Men of *Self-interest* and *knavish Designs*; who, in order to serve their own ends, en-

deavour to impose *gainful Superstitions* upon the Ignorance of their Brethren, in opposition to the most manifest Dictates of demonstrative Reason: and to Write in Defense of this Cause, under the great Disadvantage of having too many of the unlearned and unstable Part of the World deluded by these Pretensions into a false Persuasion, that none can appear in Favour of it but must deservedly incur the Censure of either a Fool, or a Knave; a Man of Ignorance, or Pride, or Diabolical Policy: I say, to espouse the Cause of *Mysteries* in these Circumstances must be own'd, humanly speaking, upon these Accounts, to be venturing upon a Task which labours under several very considerable Discouragements.

However, those who are oblig'd to defend the Cause of God, must not be affrighted from their Duty by whatever Prospect they may have of worldly Disadvantages; tho' our *Blessed Master* was despised and derided of Men, yet he went about doing good, and accomplishing the Work which his Father gave him to do; and tho' he was accus'd of *Blasphemy*, this did not prevail with him to cease asserting his own *Divinity*. We must follow his Example, if we will acquit ourselves as becomes his faithful Servants: not regarding the Consequences which may follow here, or having any Eye upon *the things which are seen, which are temporal*; but expecting,

pecting a Recompence of a dutiful Discharge of our Trust hereafter, an Inheritance with the Saints in Light, of *the things which are not seen, which are eternal.*

These Considerations, in conjunction with your Commands, and a hearty Desire to re-establish in Mens Minds right Notions of the Obligations we are under to *believe*, and of the Reasonableness of our Assent by *Faith* to the *Mysteries of Christianity*; without which we can no more be *Christians* than were *Socrates*, or *Plato*, or *Confucius*, or any other moral Heathens; have engag'd me to attempt a short *Rationale* of the *Belief of Christian Mysteries*, which have been so derided of late, and for whose sake not only the Ministers of the Gospel, but even the Gospel itself has met with intolerably scandalous Treatment at the Hands of Men who had rather laugh themselves into Damnation than lose a Jest, and give up all Religion than deny themselves the Pleasure of unsettling the Principles and Practices of weak Christians, by imposing fallacious Sophisms for just Reasoning upon their Understandings. The Book which occasion'd your desiring my Thoughts upon this Subject, I shall make some Remarks upon in its proper Place; and in the *interim*, after having given you what I look upon as a right Notion of *Christian Mysteries* in general, I shall briefly endeavour to make good the Three following Particulars.

I. First, That there may be, and are such Things in Nature as we call *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*.

II. Secondly, That God Almighty had great Reason to propose these *Mysteries*, in the way in which he has deliver'd 'em in the New Testament, as the Objects of our Assent by Faith.

III. Thirdly, That we may with the strictest Reason assent to the Truth of these Articles of our Faith; tho', as to their *real modus*, they are absolutely above our present Comprehension.

Now as to the Nature of a *Christian Mystery*, I think the following Description of it agrees perfectly well with all those which are deliver'd and propos'd as Objects of our Faith in the New Testament: That It is a *divine Truth communicated in part by God, thro' Christ and his Apostles, to the World; which is deliver'd in terms expressive of such Ideas as we are previously furnish'd with, and which acquaint us with its Existence and the Relation it has to us; but which only represent its real modus analogically, and under Types, Semblances or Shadows, it being utterly out of the reach of our present Faculties to comprehend what it is in itself, whilst we continue to see thro' a Glass darkly*

darkly in this Life. And if this Description of a *Mystery* is admitted to be good, 'tis evident that it consists of Two Parts, One of which we have, and another of which we have no Notion in this World. What we have a Notion of is, the Proposition in which it is deliver'd, and the Truth which it acquaints us with, as to its *Existence* and the *Relation* it has to us; and what we have no Notion of at all is, the real intrinsic *modus* of the Truth, whose *Existence*, &c. that Proposition informs us of; which is represented under *Semblances* and *Shadows*, from whence we can form no Conceptions at all how it is in it self, or what it is in its intrinsic Nature. With respect to both these Parts 'tis called a *Mystery*; with respect to the latter, as it is intirely above the present Comprehension of human Reason; and with respect to the former, as we should never have known its *Existence*, &c. in this World had it not been reveal'd by God. With respect to the former Part it is intirely within the Disquisition of human Reason, we may and ought to examine into the obvious Meaning of the Propositions in which any *mysterious* Truths are deliver'd, in order to discover what it is whose *Existence* we are requir'd to believe, and in what respect it relates to us: but with respect to the latter it is absolutely exempt from all human Disquisitions; God Almighty tells us that it exists

under *Semblances* and *Shadows*; but not in what respects those *Semblances* bear any *Analogy* to its *real manner of Existence*.

Instances in favour of this Distinction will not only illustrate and confirm it, but also establish the Description I have now given you of a *Christian Mystery*, and the principal Instances which occur in the New Testament are these following. The *Trinity in Unity* in the Deity, the *Hypostatical Union* of the eternal *Logos* with *Human Nature*, and the Operation of the *Spirit* of God in the Conveyance of Grace; the Nature of our *glorify'd Bodies* after the *Resurrection*, the Process of *Christ* in the Trial of Mankind at the Day of Judgment, and the *Future State* of the blessed and miserable in the next World. And whoever will look into the Accounts given of these Particulars in the New Testament, and examine the several Places in which they are deliver'd, will find that the Passages that contain 'em consist of Words which we understand, and which in their obvious Construction declare to us the present or future Existence of several *Truths* relating to Persons and Things, with the reference which those *Truths* have or shall have to us, which we should never have been able to discover, even in these respects, by the bare light of Natural Reason. And they will find farther, that tho' in these Propositions the Existence of those

Truths,

Truths, with their reference to us is plainly reveal'd, yet we are still absolutely in the dark as to the *real modus* of every single *Christian Mystery*, having 'em no other-wise represented to us than under *Semblances* and *Shadows*, borrow'd from the *Objects*, and adapted to the *Powers* of our present *Faculties*, which yet bear no more *Analogy* that we know of, to the intrinsic *Natures* of what they are brought to represent, than *Light* does to the *real Nature* of *God*; or than *seeing* and *hearing*, *repenting*, &c. do to those his *Operations* which they are brought to express *figuratively* in *Condescension* to our *Capacities*.

Thus as to the *Mystery* of the *Trinity*, we find it express'd in *Scripture* in these *Words*; *there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Spirit, and these three are one*; and imply'd in these, *Go ye therefore and make disciples of all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Of the Father*, whom we are commanded to *Pray* to as *God*, in that excellent *Formula* of *Devotion* given us by our *Blessed Lord*: *Of the Son*, who purchas'd the *Church* of *God*, which *God* is said to have purchas'd *with his own Blood*: And of the *Holy Ghost*, in endeavouring to put a *Deceit* upon whom *St. Peter* tells *Ananias* that he had *not ly'd unto man but unto God*. Now what we learn from

from these, and many more like Passages than need be inserted here, is this; that in the Holy Scriptures there is a threefold Distinction made in the Godhead, which God Almighty has thought fit to express by the Terms *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; that this is a more than *nominal Distinction* I conclude from the Form of Baptism, and from hence that *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* are commanded to be worshipp'd separately, as well as in Conjunction; but that it can't be such a Distinction as implies three independent *Essences* or Spirits, not only Natural Reason but Holy Scripture assures me in innumerable Passages: Hence it follows that God Almighty can't be reveal'd to me in these Places as Three and One in the same respect. And the *Existence* of this *Distinction*, with the relation it hath to us in the whole Method of our Redemption, is what I call the *First Part* in this *Mystery*, and all of it that I comprehend. But then what this *Distinction* is in its *intrinsic Nature*, which is represented to me under these Names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; what is intended by the *Son's* being the only *begotten* of the *Father*, or by the *Holy Ghost's* being *sent* by, or proceeding from the *Father* and the *Son* in Conjunction, which Forms of Expression are all that we can lay hold on to let us into the *intrinsic modus* of this *Mystery*, we know no more than if no
such

such thing as a *trine Distinction* in the Deity had been reveal'd: For that these Expressions must not be literally understood, Scripture and Reason assure us in what they teach us relating to the Nature and Attributes of God: and as they are but *Semblances* and *Shadows* made use of by God Almighty in condescension to our present Capacities, to acquaint us with the *Existence*, &c. of a *Trinity in Unity* in the Divine Nature; we can conclude nothing at all from them as to the *real modus* of this *Distinction*, inasmuch as God Almighty has not told us whether they bear any real *Analogy* at all, or if they do, in what respects they bear any to this *Distinction* as it is in the Divine Nature.

And as these Two Parts of a *Christian Mystery* are thus manifest in this, they are equally so in all the other *Mysteries* deliver'd in the New Testament; and the *real modus* of these *mysterious Truths* is what we can never in the least discover from the *Types* and *Shadows*, and *analogical Semblances*, under which their *Existence* and the *Relation* they have to us are reveal'd. Our *Future State of Glory* is represented sometimes by our Saviour *Christ* under the *Semblances* of *sitting down with him, and eating and drinking with him in his Father's Kingdom*; sometimes under the *Similitude* of *sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in*
the

the Kingdom of God; and by himself and his Apostles 'tis sometimes call'd a Kingdom, sometimes a Crown of Life, and sometimes a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away; and tho' these Expressions suffice to acquaint us with its Existence and the Relation it has to us; yet if we rack our Brains upon this Point to Death, we shall never come one jot towards a true Sense of the intrinsic Nature of our Future State. Notwithstanding all

1 Joh. 3. 2. these beautiful Scenes St. John assures us that tho' we are now the children of God, it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he does appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And St. Paul gives us to understand that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him; and when he was caught up into the Third Heaven, he tells us that there he heard unspeakable words, such as it is not lawful, or rather (as the Original may be translated) such as it is not possible for man to utter. The Nature of our glorify'd Bodies and our Future State are typically represented to us under several beautiful Colours in the New Testament, but what they are in themselves, we, who see thro' a glass darkly can't possibly discern: He who was caught up into the Third Heaven and saw a Specimen of 'em, wanted Words to utter his Vision, having met with what we have no Ideas

Ideas of in this World; and the Case is the same with all the other *Mysteries* in the New Testament: One Part of 'em we do understand from the Propositions they are deliver'd in, their *Existence* and the *Relation* they have to us; but as to their *intrinsic Natures*, notwithstanding every thing that is reveal'd, we can't utter any thing of *Sense* about 'em: we must have a new Furniture of Ideas, and alter'd and improv'd Faculties, before they will be brought in any measure to stoop to our Comprehension.

And now having given you what I look upon as a right Notion of *Christian Mysteries* in General; I come to Shew in the First place,

I. *First*, That there may be and are such things in Nature as we call *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*.

Now that our present Stock of Ideas is not by far so large as it might be, even in this World, were our Senses so constituted as to furnish us with all the Ideas which the present visible frame of Nature might afford; or that we have not nearly those quantities of Ideas which Nature might furnish us with, were not our present Senses acute enough to be affected by her finer and more delicate operations, every one must grant

grant who owns that we are not able to give a justly mechanical account of the internal Springs and Principles of almost any of the infinite beautiful *Phænomena* which occur every day in the frame and texture and operations of this wonderful Structure which we call the visible World. For as our inability to account for these infinite *Phænomena* which we are every where incompassed with, demonstrates that we are ignorant of the intrinsic natures and essences, principles and modes of Operation, &c. of the mechanical causes from whence these *Phænomena* proceed; so our ignorance of these proves with the same force that we are wanting in innumerable Ideas, which Senses more acute and adapted to the giving us information of the inmost Natures and Powers and Properties of things, might furnish us with. Hence we must acknowledge, that all the present frame of Nature in its inmost recesses is one great *Mystery*, above the unraveling of our present reason, assisted with all the information we can procure from our Senses in their present circumstances: or if any is dispos'd to deny this, he will scarce be able to justify his Conduct till he shews us that nothing in Nature is a *Mystery* to him, but that he has adequate Ideas of the Primary and Specific Essences of Things, and can thence deduce mechanically the Operations of Nature in all the *Phænomena* which

which occur every where in the visible World. And whereas none can deny but that, had God Almighty so pleas'd, we might have been created with more Senses than Five, and a Sixth or Seventh Sense might have met with innumerable proper Objects, which we can no more have any Notions of now than the blind Man had of *Scarlet*, who compar'd it to the *Sound* of a *Trumpet*; I say, whereas none can deny this with any better Reason than a Man born deaf would have to deny the Existence of *Sounds* as they are in our Sensations: Hence it apparently follows that our present Stock of Ideas may be prodigiously shorter than we can imagine of what the World about us (had we as many Senses as wou'd receive 'em all, and were those Senses acute enough to let us see Nature in her inmost Recesses) might furnish us with. And hence we must conclude, that Nature is not only *mysterious* in innumerable Cases, which we are inform'd of, and must conclude from our Inability to account for her in her secret and delicate Operations arising from the Natural Deficiency of our present Senses; but that she may be *mysterious* in many more, or abound with innumerable more *Mysteries*, which we are not the least conscious of because unprovided with those Senses of which they wou'd be the proper Objects; and which in Circumstances

cumstances sufficiently refin'd might lead us into vast Fields of beautiful Contemplations which now lie hid in the Womb of impenetrable Obscurity, and are cover'd with *thick darkness that may be felt.*

The Question then is, whether these *Mysteries in Nature* are *Mysteries* also in a *Christian* Sense? And I answer that, strictly speaking, they are not: For tho', for instance, in the *Mystery of the Connection of the Parts of Matter*, my Senses inform me of the *Existence* of the Thing, or that the Parts of Matter are actually connected; but neither my Senses nor my Reason can let me into the *real intrinsic modus* of their Connection: Yet were my Senses acute enough to let me into the intrinsic Natures and Essences, and Modes of Operation of Things, I might be inabled by those refin'd Senses to discover the whole *Mystery*, and to comprehend the Reason of the Connection of the Parts of Matter; whereas were my Senses never so refin'd, I could not see one jot farther than I do into the *real modus* of any one of those *Mysteries* which are deliver'd in the New Testament; the real Nature and Attributes of God, the Trinity in Unity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Operation of the Blessed Spirit in the Conveyance of Grace; the Process of Christ at the Day of Judgment, the Nature of our glorify'd Bodies, and that of the
Future

future state of good Christians in another World ; these things, I say, as to their *real modus*, are out of the reach of the most refin'd Senses: They are to us, who *see through a Glass darkly, ineffables ; such, as it is not possible for Man to utter* : And, by parity of reason, such as it is not possible for him, from his present *mediums of Intelligence*, however subtilis'd, adequately to conceive. Had our Eyes all the Advantages to take in Objects at great distances, which the best *Telescopes* can furnish us with ; and could we see more acutely into things than we can assisted with the best *Microscopes* ; and were our other Senses proportionably refin'd : even with these advantages, as *no Man hath seen God at any time ; so no Man could see God and live* ; The most acute Senses could not let us one jot into the real Nature of that *Fountain of Light*, to those who have Faculties to receive it ; but to us, *Fountain of ineffable Mysteries*. To discern the *intrinsic modus* of the Nature of God, in any measure, as it really is, and consequently of that *distinction* in the Godhead, which we call the *Trinity in Unity*, of the Incarnation, &c. the greatest refining upon our present sensitive Organs, will contribute nothing : These *Mysteries* are not, nor ever can be the proper Objects of our present Faculties in whatever refinement

Vid. A Letter in Answer to a Book Entituled, Christianity not mysterious, p. 31, 32, &c.

as to their *real modus* : But we must have our Faculties not only improv'd, but alter'd, or else they will contribute no more to our attaining any thing of the real Nature of these sublime Truths, than exquisite Ears will contribute to the giving a Man born blind, just Notions of Light and Colours. Thus you see, that the *Mysteries in Nature*, are not *Mysteries in a Christian Sense* ; such as I have describ'd the *Mysteries* of our Holy Religion to be, and that consonantly to the Accounts given of them in the New Testament.

But then, *as* we are assur'd, from our Senses, and our Reason, that we are environ'd with infinite *Mysteries*, on all hands, in the visible Frame of *Nature* ; and, *as* we can assign no reason to the contrary, but that, had God Almighty so pleas'd, we might have had more Senses given us than five, which wou'd have inform'd us of numberless more *Mysteries* in the visible World : Can we assign any reason to the contrary, but that there may be Creatures somewhere, in the Universe, endow'd with Faculties intirely different from ours, furnish'd with infinite proper Objects ; which we can have no Notions of, 'till our present Faculties are improv'd and chang'd ; and we have the same *mediums* of the conveyance

veyance of Intelligence of external Objects as they have? A blind Man may as well argue against the Existence of Light and Colours, as we against the possibility of this Hypothesis. Whereas conceive the Existence of these *invisible things* possible, and you have the possibility of what we call *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*. And as they are *possible*, so they are *actual*: For the Nature of the *Essence and Attributes of God*, are *Mysteries* in this Sense: What tho' we know, as to their *Existence* from the Works of his hands, in the visible and invisible World; yet as to their *real modus*, or the *true nature* of God, we are absolutely in the dark: Forming only weak and partial Conceptions of 'em, from some *Analogy* we find they must bear to what Perfections we meet with in the Works of his hands: And we shall never see 'em in any measure as they are, 'till we have Faculties better proportion'd, than those we have now, to such transcendent Discoveries. Besides that, if *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*, are *possible*, all the Evidence we have for the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, proves 'em not only *possible*, but *actual*: For as we see clearly from what has been said, that there may be such things in Nature, as we call *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*, hence it follows, with all the Evidence we have for the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, that

such things are actually reveal'd in the New Testament: For the * obvious Construction of multitudes of passages in this Divine Book, clearly makes for the actual revelation of several *Mysteries* in the Sense I contend for; and that the *obvious* Interpretation shou'd be follow'd, where no reason can be assign'd to the contrary, is a piece of Justice due to all Books, whether of *Human*, or *Divine Authority*; and if *Mysteries*, in a *Christian Sense*, are *possible*, then no reason can be assign'd, why the passages which deliver those *Mysteries* we acknowledge, should not be constru'd in their obvious meaning; and if no reason can be assign'd against their obvious Construction, 'tis unreasonable to construe 'em otherwise. The Divine Authority of the New Testament, I assume here, because our present decryers of *Mysteries*, profess to assume it also: But I chose not to prove the possible and actual Existence of *Christian My-*

* By *Obvious* I don't mean here, or wherever I use it strictly *Literal*; but such a Construction as they naturally seem to challenge, after they are freed from all apparent repugnancy, either to one another, or to any natural Truths evident upon the first and manifest Principles of reason, or to what either reason or revelation teaches us concerning the Nature and Attributes of God. Thus far we may, and ought to make use of our *reason*, in adjusting the *Articles* of our *Faith*: And what Construction those passages bid the fairest for, after this Adjustment, I call their *obvious meaning*. Which I am to prove, we are oblig'd in reason to assent to, whether it be within, or without the reach of our comprehension. *Vid.* Remarks on pag. 17, 18, &c. of the *Essay concerning the use of Reason*, &c.

series

series immediately and solely from thence, because our modern *Mystery-baters* make *Mysteries* in this sense, and *Absurdities* or *Contradictions* absolutely synonymous; and in Consequence of this Imagination, are either for expunging, or putting forc'd Constructions upon all such passages, in Holy Scriptures, as propose these *Mysteries*, as the Objects of our assent by *Faith*. Whereas if *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense* are possible, as I have shewn they are; then to call those we meet with in the obvious Construction of Scripture, therefore *Contradictions* because *Mysteries*, is gross nonsense: To talk of expunging 'em, upon this score, is profane Impertinence: And to construe the passages which contain 'em in any other than their obvious meaning (when nothing can be shewn, in that Construction, dissonant from reason, or unworthy of God) is to do so by the Word of God, as wou'd be esteem'd insufferably dishonest dealing with any Writings of meer *Human Authority*: and can terminate in nothing else, but rendering the very Fundamentals of *Christianity*, as laid down in the Holy Scriptures, intirely precarious.

II. The second Proposition I propos'd to insist upon, is this, That God Almighty had great reason to propose these *Mysteries*, in the way in which he has deliver'd 'em in

the New Testament, as the Objects of our *assent* by Faith.

And the principal reason why he propos'd 'em at all, was in order to make 'em, amongst other Motives, Inducements to the practice of what shall fit and prepare us for a future enjoyment of eternal Happiness. And the reason why they are propos'd to us in that way in which they are deliver'd in the New Testament, is to be taken from nothing else, but the *Nature* of the *State* in which this eternal Happiness shall be enjoy'd; and the *Means* by which a Title to it was procur'd; and *those* which are, and have been made use of, in order to fit and prepare us for that state: Compar'd with the shortness and imperfection of our present Faculties, the narrowness of our understandings, and the defective nature of all the *Media*, by which alone we can now come by any insight into, and comprehension of the reasons and natures of things.

1. *First*, The principal reason why God Almighty propos'd the *Mysteries* of *Christianity*, as the Objects of our *Assent* by *Faith*, at all, was in order to make 'em (amongst other motives) inducements to the practice of what shall fit us for a future enjoyment of eternal Happiness. Indeed I can't say, that
this

this was the only reason which God Almighty had in view upon this occasion; for as he proposes to us a future state of Happiness, upon such Terms as are express'd in the Gospel-Covenant; and as those Terms are the *belief* and *practice* of what we are requir'd to *believe* and *do*, in the New Testament; thus far the *belief* of the *Mysteries of Christianity*, is one of the *Terms* of the *New Covenant*. But then it is not only such, but a firm assent to each *Mystery* is a strong motive (and under this consideration it was, principally, that it was propos'd as an Object of our Faith) to that Obedience which shall secure us of this eternal Happiness. Such is the *Mystery* of the *Hypostatical* union of the eternal *Logos* with the Soul and Body of Man; and such is the *Mystery* of the *Satisfaction* of *God-man* for the Sins of the World: Such is the *Mystery* of the operation of the *Holy Spirit* in the conveyance of *Grace*; and such are the *Mysteries* of the *Resurrection*, and of the *Glorified Bodies* in which we shall partake of the *Mystical Crown of Life*, reserv'd for those who shall be thought worthy of the *New, and Mystical Jerusalem*. In these glorious Manifestations of the great Method of the Redemption of Mankind through *Christ* Coloss.
Jesus, are hid all the *Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*; cap. ii. v. 3. and whoever takes them into serious Consideration, will find, that they

raise in him such beautiful Ideas of the love of God to Mankind, in admitting us to terms of Mercy and Reconciliation, and eternal Happiness; such amazingly glorious a Sense of the wonderful Condescension of the *only begotten Son of God*, in assuming our Nature, and proposing the terms of Reconciliation to Apostate Man, and, at last, after the most ungrateful Treatment, during a Life *full of Sorrow*, and *acquainted with Grief*, in dying a painful and ignominious Death, to *satisfy* for the Sins of the World; and such a lovely Notion of the transcendent Compassion of the *Holy Spirit*, who not only contributes to the facilitating of our Duty, by his constant *assisting Grace*, and by plying us with such Motives, *in Season, and out of Season*, as may *prevent* us from running headlong upon our own ruin; but who makes *Intercession* with God, for the Success of our Warfare, *with Groanings that cannot be uttered*. I say whoever seriously considers these things, and with all the deformity of Sin discover'd in so astonishing a manner, in the Gospel-dispensation, with the inexpressible Rewards and Punishments which will attend the performance or neglect of our Duty, after a short Pilgrimage here, to all eternity; *must count all things but loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*, and for his sake be willing to *suffer the loss of all things, and*

to count them but dung, so he may win Christ.

None of these Doctrines of our Saviour (to apply the Words of an excellent Prelate of our Church, to my present purpose) were calculated for the gratification of Mens idle Curiosities, the busying and amusing them with airy and useless Speculations—but they had an immediate relation to Practice, and were the genuine Principles and Foundations, upon which all Human and Divine Virtues were naturally to be superstructed.

Lord Arch
Bishop of
York's Ser-
mon be-
fore the
Queen on
Christmas-
day. 1704.

2. Secondly, As to God's proposing the *Mysteries of Christianity*, in the way which he has been pleas'd to make use of in the New Testament: It is, as I have already hinted, what may very easily and briefly be vindicated. For inasmuch as our future Condition shall be quite different both in Nature and Perfection from that which we are now in; and our Title to it is procur'd and settl'd on God's Part by such means, and the principal Motives to it are of such intrinsic Natures as we can't possibly comprehend, whilst we continue to see thro' a *glass darkly* in this World: Inasmuch as some of these are *what it is not possible for man to utter*, and others *what the Angels themselves desire to pry into*: I say inasmuch as these things are thus, and yet God Almighty, determin'd to offer this Method of

of Salvation to fallen Man, who has no Ideas at all of the Things relating to another Life, nor can have any Notion of the intrinsic Nature and Perfections of God till his present Faculties are alter'd and improv'd in a Future State: Hence it is that none of these Things can be communicated to us now in their *real intrinsic modus* even by immediate Revelation, unless our present Faculties are alter'd and enlarg'd, and we are furnish'd with a new *sett* of Ideas vastly different from what we have hitherto been acquainted with from *Sensation* and *Reflection*. And whereas were these Matters communicated in their *real modus* to any one Person, or any determinate *sett* of Men, after having their Faculties alter'd and improv'd, and a new Furniture of Ideas sufficient to this purpose; these Men cou'd not communicate 'em in this manner to the World, any more than a Man possess'd of the Sense of *Seeing* can give adequate Notions of *Light* and *Colours* to one that is born *blind*: Whereas farther (as is evident from what I have but now offer'd) the End of any Revelation of these Matters may be answer'd if we are brought to understand their *Existence* and the *Relation they have* to us, however we are left in the dark as to their *intrinsic modus*; and we may be brought acquainted with their *Existence*, &c.

and

and what is sufficient for us to know of 'em, by having 'em represented to us by *typical* Allusions to what they bear the nearest *Analogy* to, and we are previously acquainted with in this World: Hence it is that God (who acts always in the concise way as well in the Moral as in the Natural World, where there is no reason to justify a circular Method of Proceeding) has been pleas'd to acquaint us with the *Existence* of the *Mysteries* of *Christianity*, and with the *relation* they have to us, in the Method made use of in the New Testament: That he has assur'd us of a Future State of inexpressible Happiness if we are obedient to his Laws, under the Type of a *Crown of Glory* that *fadeth not away*; and so for the rest: tho' what *Analogy* such a *Crown of Glory* bears to the *real Nature* of our Future State of Happiness we know not: Or rather we may be satisfy'd that it bears no *real Analogy* at all to it, any farther than as the *Type* is one of the brightest *Ensigns* of *Earthly Glory*, it must typify the inexpressible *Glory* and *Happiness* of our *Future State*.

As God Almighty had not communicated the *Mysteries* of *Christianity* to us at all, had it not been principally in order to prevail with us to endeavour after such an *Obedience* as wou'd secure us of eternal *Happiness*; so he commu-
nicated

nicated 'em in the way we find 'em in, be-
 cause he saw *that* would be the concisest
 Method of Proceeding; and because he knew
 that so communicated they carry'd sufficient
 Weight along with 'em to answer with all
 impartially rational Agents the end of their
 Communication; For as we are assur'd that
 at the *Day of Judgment* there shall be made
 the strictest and most accurate Examination
 into our past Lives and Actions, from the
Books and Records which we are typically
 told shall be made use of upon this solemn
 Occasion, ought not this to move us to
 have a strict regard to our Lives and Acti-
 ons, tho' the *real modus* of *Christ's* Proceed-
 ing at this time be as much in the dark as
 the Day and Hour when it shall commence?
 In strict Reason it ought. And the same
 may be said for the rest. Besides that to
 have communicated 'em not only as to their
Existence, and the *relation* they have to us
 but in their *real modus*; to have given us
 a View of Heaven *as it is*, and disengag'd
 from all the *Semblances*, borrow'd from the
 best Images in this World, under which its
 native Lustre is now veil'd; would have
 been to turn our *Faith* into *Vision*, and
 therein to destroy all the Virtue of *Faith*;
 and to take off much from the Praise-wor-
 thiness of good Works, by laying us under
 an almost invincible Necessity of living obe-
dient

dient and holy Lives. Had our Senses been made much acuter than they are, tho' they wou'd have furnish'd us with more Philosophy, they wou'd not so well have answer'd the end of their Institution in serving the common Exigencies of Life: And had our Faith been turn'd into *Vision*, tho' it wou'd have made us the more knowing Men, in this State of Probation it would not have been so proper a Motive to a commendable Obedience.

III. My Third Business is to prove that we may with the strictest Reason assent to the Truth of these *Articles* of our *Faith*, the *Mysteries* of *Christianity*; tho', as to their *real modus*, they are absolutely above our present Comprehension.

Now from the two sorts of *Mysteries* which I have prov'd actually existent under my *First* General Head, *Mysteries* in *Nature*, and *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*, which are utterly inexplicable by the best improv'd human Reason, as to the *real modus* of their *Existence*, 'tis evident that Things may be said to be above *human Reason* in Two Senses. First, as they are what we want *I* *deas* of as to their internal mechanical *modus* by reason of the shortness and imperfection of our present Senses, but which we have *Capacities*

cities sufficient to comprehend, were these Obstructions remov'd, and our Senses sufficiently refin'd and improv'd. And, Secondly, as they are not only what we want Ideas of, but what our present Senses however refin'd and improv'd could never give us any Notions of at all as they are in themselves; and what we shall never be able in any measure to comprehend without not only an Inlargement but an Alteration of our present Faculties. In the former of these Senses all the *Mysteries* in Nature, the infinite beautiful *Phænomena* which occur every day in the visible World, and which we as to their internal Mechanical *Modus* can't account for, are *above human Reason*: They are what would not be above the Explication of human Reason were our Senses sufficiently refin'd to let us into the intrinsic Natures and Essences of Things. And in the latter of these Senses all the *Mysteries* in Religion, as the real Nature of God, and the mode of *Distinction* of the Three Persons in the Deity, and the rest of the *Mysteries* deliver'd in the New Testament, are *above human Reason*: They are what the greatest Refinement of our present Faulties will not inable us to account for in any measure as they are in themselves; but these Faculties must not only be improv'd but alter'd, in order to bring'em in any degree within our comprehension.

Thus

Thus as we argue at present from *Sense* and *Consciousness* in our Enquiries into what few natural *Phænomena*, we are able to give any tolerable account of, as to the mechanical Operations of Nature in their Production; so were our Senses sufficiently refin'd, and had we them in such a number as have their proper Objects in Nature; and were we acquainted from our refin'd Senses, with the inmost Essences of External Objects, and were we *conscious* of the inmost Nature or Essence of the thinking part of our selves, all the *Mysteries* in Nature would cease, and we should be able to trace her in all her inmost recesses, and through all the beautiful mazes of her now latent performances. Whereas refine upon our present Senses as much as you will, and add as many more to the number as you will be pleas'd to imagine may have their proper Objects in the present Frame of Nature; and conceive your self *conscious* of the internal Essence and Nature of your own Soul; and hence you will indeed commence an excellent Natural Philosopher, and from the dependency of created Nature, then clearly seen into infer, with an evidence which the most obstinate Atheist must submit to, the Existence of a Creator *God blessed for ever*; and when the most secret Beauties of Nature are laid before your Eyes, the Wisdom and

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Contrivance of the supreme Artificer, will shine upon you with the brightest lustre. But still you will become sensible of the *Existence* and *Attributes* of God in the same way, though by more and more beautiful Arguments than you do now; and you will be able to form no Idea of him, but by removing from him all the Imperfections which you find in his Creatures, and enlarging indefinitely all the Perfections you meet with; as we do now: That is, you will only under all these Advantages be able to say that God is absolutely perfect in his Nature and his Attributes, though what that Nature is in it self, and what are those Attributes in their *intrinsic Nature*, to which you ascribe absolute Perfection, you know not. These and all other the *Mysteries of Christianity* will under all these Advantages continue *ineffable*, and, after the greatest refinement of *Sense*, *what it will be found impossible for man to utter.*

The Question then is under this head, whether we may not with the strictest Reason, assent to the *Existence*, and *Relation had to us* of the *Mysteries of Christianity*, if requir'd by God to do it, though we can't at all comprehend what those things are in themselves (or their *real modus*) whose *Existence* and *Reference to us* we assent to. And
in

in Answer to this Question, 'tis clear that God Almighty may require any thing at our hands which we may reasonably do: If we may therefore reasonably assent to some Truths, as to their *Existence*, though we have no Ideas or Notions at all of their *real modus*; then God Almighty may reasonably demand us to assent to others in the same Circumstances. And that we may do the former, may be prov'd demonstratively in a few Words.

Indeed as to the *Mysteries in Nature*, or things *above Human Reason* in the former of the two Senses assign'd, nothing can be more clear than that we have demonstrative evidence for infinite Truths, whose *real mechanical modus* we have no Ideas of at all: And consequently nothing can be more manifest than that we may reasonably assent to several Truths of this kind. Thus we may and must assent to the Truth of this Proposition, that *the parts of Matter are connected*, though we are intirely ignorant of the internal mechanical *modus* of their Connection: And thus we may and must assent to the *Existence* of all the other inexplicable *Phænomena* which occur every where in the visible World, though *how* they are effected, or by what mechanical Powers in Nature they are produc'd, we are absolutely

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unable.

unable to explain. And whereas the Deists would teach us to infer, that because *Ideas are the sole Foundation of our Knowledge and Assent*, therefore we can't assent to any thing which we have not an immediate Idea of, and would thence invalidate the reasonableness of our assent to *Christian Mysteries*, because we confess we have no immediate Ideas of them : The Inference which they build upon is, you see, so far from being true, that 'tis as clear as the Light, that we may with demonstrative reason assent to many natural Truths, relating to such things, as we have no Ideas at all of. Thus having the Evidence of Sense for the *effects* we can thence infer, and assent to the Existence of the *Causes*, though what those Causes are whose Existence we infer and assent to we know not ; And thus having Ideas of the inherent Attributes of *Matter*, and *thinking Substances*, and of their necessary dependence on *something*, as a support of their Existence, we infer and assent to the Existence of the *Substances* which support them ; though what those *Substances* are in their intrinsic Natures we are intirely ignorant ; having not the least glimpse of an Idea of the inmost Natures of the *Essences* of things. Nay thus having Ideas of the *Inconsistency* of the inherent Attributes of *Matter* and *thinking Substances* (which those Attributes, upon a due

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comparison furnish us with) in the same *Subject*, we infer and assent to the intire *Incompatibility* in *Nature* of these two *Substances* upon demonstrative Evidence; though what matter is in it self, and what is the inmost *Nature* of thinking *Substance*, we are utterly ignorant. So far it is from being true what the Decryers of *Mysteries* contend for, that on the contrary 'tis demonstrable that we have Natural Knowledge strictly so call'd, of the *Existence*, *different Natures*, &c. of Objects, of whose either *Essences*, or *Modes of Existence* we have no *Ideas* at all. Where though *Ideas* are the sole Foundation of our Knowledge and Assent, as well as in all other cases; yet *from things of which we have Ideas we can infer the Existence*, &c. of things of which we have no *Ideas*; and that with as great a force of Demonstration in our Deductions as if we actually had *Immediate Ideas* of them.

And if we may reasonably assent to the *Existence* of some things, though we have no *Immediate Ideas* at all of the *Real Modus* of their *Existence*, why may not God Almighty demand us to assent to others in the like Circumstances? If we may assent upon the Evidence of Demonstration to the *Existence*, *different Natures*, &c. of several things, the manner of whose *Existence*, &c. we have no

Notion of at all; for want of Senses acute enough to let us into the Essences, Modes of Operations, &c. of *Bodies* which produce what we call the *Mysteries in Nature*, why may we not do the same in the case of the *Mysteries* of Christianity, and assent to their Existence upon the Authority of Almighty God; though *how* these *things can be*, whose Existence we assent to, we shall never know in any measure till our present Faculties have undergone several considerable *Alterations* as well as *Improvements*. Indeed as to some great *Mysteries* common to Christianity and Natural Reason (I mean the Being and Attributes of Almighty God) 'tis plain that we have irrefragable Evidence for their *Existence*; though what is the intrinsic Nature and *Essence* of that God whose *Existence*, upon Natural Principles, we can demonstrate, *how* he is *omnipresent* who is a *Spirit*, and consequently can have no relation to space in any way which we can conceive; and *how* he is *omniscient*, with respect to not only what is past and present, but also what is to come, as that implies his *præscience* both of what shall come to pass hereafter in the way of necessary Causality, and moreover all such future events as are left to the arbitrary Determination of free Agents; whose *Omniscience* and *Omnipresence* are nevertheless demonstrable, (and the same may
be

be said of his *Infinity* and other demonstrable Attributes) we neither know nor ever shall know from our present Faculties, whilst we continue to *see through a Glass darkly* in this World. And if we may upon the safest Principles of Natural Reason assent to the *Existence* of the Essence and Attributes of Almighty God ; though *what* he is in himself, or in any of these Attributes we can't possibly comprehend : I say if we may and must assent to *these Mysteries of Christianity* upon the safest rational Evidence ; why may not God Almighty reasonably require our assent to *the rest* upon his own *Authority*, as to their *Existence*, and the *Relation* they have to us, though as to the *real modus* of the *Trinity* in *Unity*, of God *incarnate*, &c. we are intirely in the dark ; and know, if possible, less of them than of the *manner* of God's Ubiquity ? For the *Socinians* and *Deists* to come over us here with their darling Sophism, that because *Ideas are the sole Foundation of our Knowledge*, and assent therefore we can know, or assent to nothing which we have not an immediate Idea of, is only to shew their assurance ; for you see clearly that we have Knowledge of the Existence and different Natures of things, whose intrinsic Natures, or real manner of Existence we have no Ideas of at all ; and that not only in what

I call the *Mysteries of Nature*, but in some *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense*. Our constant Method of reasoning in these cases is *from things of which we have Ideas to infer things which we have no Ideas of*; and this Method, you see, is demonstratively good in several cases, both in matters of *Philosophy*, and *Natural Religion*. And if we may justifiably do thus in matters within the district of Natural Reason, why not in matters purely *Christian*, and which depend for their Evidence upon the Authority of *Divine Testimony*? If from the Ideas which we have from *Sensation* and *Reflection* of the Attributes of *Matter* and *Immaterial Substances* we can infer their *Existence*, and different *intrinsic Natures*; though what either of them are in their respective *intrinsic Natures* we are intirely ignorant: Why may we not, if requir'd by God, make the same use of our Faculties in matters of Religion as well as Natural Reason; and from our Idea of God's Veracity, in Conjunction with those that satisfy us that the Scriptures are the Word of God, infer and believe (for instance) the Truth of this Proposition, that *we shall be rais'd in the likeness of Christ*; though in what that *likeness* shall consist, we are as absolutely ignorant as we are of the Essences of Things.

This is as clear as the Light, unless tho' we

we may do thus upon *internal Evidence* we can't upon *Divine Authority*: And 'tis clear that we may do thus upon *Authority* either *Divine* or *Human*, if *Authority* in general is a rational Ground of Assent as well as *internal Evidence*. 'Tis true some have deny'd that it is so: But till they can shew that we can't reasonably believe either *God* or *Man* upon their *Word*; that all assent to either Human or Divine Testimony is impossible and absurd; they must give us leave to suspend our Assent to this their Assertion. Upon their own Principles their own *Authority* must not establish it; And I am pretty confident we must never *believe* it at all if we suspend our Assent to it till they make it evident.

And now (Sir) where's the Absurdity of assenting to the *Mysteries* of the *Christian Faith*? Or why must the *Clergy* be either Knaves or Fools for defending these *Mysteries* as reasonably to be believ'd by those who call themselves *Christians*? That there may be such things as *Mysteries* in a *Christian Sense* is as clear as the Light; and that there are several such in the New Testament, none can deny who does the same Justice to that Book as is reasonably challeng'd by even common Human Writers; and that we are requir'd to believe them the Holy Scriptures sufficiently assure us; and that we may ra-

tionally assent to them, though we comprehend them but in part, I have made it sufficiently evident. The Dirt therefore which is thrown upon the Clergy upon *their* account returns upon those that throw it : And the Gentlemen Deists ought not to take it amiss if I say that it is either out of Pride, or Ignorance, or ill Design, that they profanely ridicule the *Mysteries of Christianity* : They have no reason on their side, and consequently must be influenc'd by some ill Motives, or other in this Conduct.

Were the *Mysteries* of our Holy Religion, as propos'd in the New Testament, in their obvious Construction real *Contradictions* ; I know no *Clergy-man* who would not discard them in that Construction as well as any *Deist* of them all. For instance, were it said that *there are Three Gods that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these Three Gods, though Three in Substance, are in Substance but One God* : We could not believe it ; any more than that a thing might be and not be at the same time, and in the same respect. Whereas when 'tis only said that *there are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these Three are One* : Where's the Absurdity of believing that as the *Body, the Soul, and the Animal Spirits* make but *One Man* ; so the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*

Ghost make but One God? Where's the Absurdity of believing that in the Divine Essence there is such a *distinction*, as we figuratively call a *distinction of Persons*, because it is reveal'd to us under the *Typical* Terms of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*; I say where's the Absurdity for us to believe this who know nothing at all of the real Nature of God, and consequently can't possibly make any material Objection against such a *Distinction*? 'Tis true how great, or *what* this *Distinction* is *analogically* represented to us under these *Semblances*, we know no more from what is reveal'd than we do the *Real Essence* of that God to whom it relates; neither can we attempt to discover the *manner* of this *Distinction* without the most ridiculous extravagancy: For though the *Analogies* made use of upon this occasion discover this *Distinction*, and at the same time the strict Union there is 'twixt the *distinguish'd* in the Divine Essence; yet the *manner* of this *Distinction* they neither do, nor design to let us into: Neither indeed could they, or any other such like *analogical* Expressions in their stead, let us into it in any measure without new Faculties commensurate to what we shall ever be able to apprehend of it. And when we have new Faculties all use of *Analogies* will cease: When *that which is perfect shall come, that which*

which is in part will be done away: And we shall no more need to see through a Glass darkly, when we see Face to Face.

This *Mystery* was reveal'd to us, among other like reasons, to give us right Notions of the Dignity of the Person who redeemed us; and of the Demerit of Sin; and withal to encourage us to do our utmost to forsake it in consideration of the assistance we may reasonably hope for, if we are not wanting to our selves, from the *Holy Spirit of God*: And if it answers these purposes the end of its being reveal'd is serv'd. And all the rest were reveal'd also for the Promotion of Obedience and a Holy Life. Which as they relate to *Persons* and *Things* of another World, which we neither have nor can have any proper Notions of during our stay upon Earth; hence it is that we are told of their *Existence*, and the *Relation* they have to us under *Semblances* and *Shadows*; and this Method of revealing them is sufficient to answer the end of their Communication. As to what they are in themselves, our intire Ignorance of this does not at all affect the reasonableness of our assenting to their *Existence*. And when we have got new Faculties, their *real modus* will be a proper Subject of our enquiring into a future State.

I come

I come now (Sir,) after have given you a short *Rationale* of our belief of the *Mysteries* of Christianity, to make some brief Remarks upon the Book which occasion'd your setting me this Task: Which the Author calls an *Essay concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, the Evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony*. And first, I must have a Remark upon the *Title* it self. Now in this *Title* 'tis plain that by *Proposi-*^{V. Essay.}
tions the Evidence whereof depends upon Hu-^{P. 7. Sect. 4.}
man Testimony, he means Propositions contain'd in the Holy Scriptures; and 'tis plain from the whole Tenor of the Book, that in these Propositions he has a more immediate Eye upon those which contain the *Mysteries* of our *Christian Faith*: 'tis plain also from the whole Book that in this *Title* by *the use of Reason in these Propositions*, he means what use we ought to make of our Reason in discovering the Truth or Falshood, Probability or Improbability of any particular Proposition in the Scriptures: Whence it follows that by *Evidence* he does not mean the Evidence we have that they are the Word of God, but the Evidence we have for the Truth or Falshood of what they contain. So that this *Title*, if it is pertinently put before the Book, may be very justly and more plainly express'd thus; *an Enquiry what use we ought to make of our Reason in examining*

amining into the Truth or Falshood of such Doctrins as are contain'd in the Scriptures, and whose Evidence depends upon Human Testimony. Now to say that we have no more Evidence than bare *Human Testimony* for the Truth of the Doctrins contain'd in any Propositions in Holy Scriptures is false: The *Testimony* upon which we believe that any Proposition in Scripture, or the whole Scripture together is the Word of God is *Human Testimony*; corroborated by the subject matter of the Scripture it self: Which as to both its *moral* and *doctrinal* part, as to the end it proposes to attain, and the means it makes use of in order to attain it (taking it all together as a Scheme laid by God Almighty to recover Mankind out of their universal degeneracy into a state suitable to the original Excellency of their Nature; which design is infinitely becoming our natural Notions of the Deity, and consonant to the reasonable hopes and expectations of the wisest and best Heathens) must be confess'd to be so beautiful, and so harmoniously consistent; so just and perfect in its Moral, and so transcendent in its Doctrinal Part, as to speak God its Author in a way which impartial Reason can never contradict: To demonstrate that it came from God, as it could *never have enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive.* Upon *Human Testimony*
(I say)

V. Clark's
second
Vol. at
Mr. Boyle's
Lecture,
from
p. 241. to
the end.

(I say) corroborated by these collateral Evidences it is that we believe any Proposition in Scripture, or the whole Scriptures together to be the Word of God. But then being thus assur'd of its *Authority*, the Evidence we have for the *Truth* of each Proposition in Scripture is *Divine Testimony*: We are assur'd from the former Topic that it came from God, and the Evidence we have for its *Truth*, is the *Testimony* of God.

I have nothing to say to his first three Sections, only that when he says that *all Propositions whatever consist of Terms or Words* P. 3. 4. *which stand for Ideas concerning which some Agreement is affirm'd or deny'd*; and in consequence of this, that *when Truth, Falshood, Probability or Improbability are apply'd to Propositions, nothing is meant by them but the necessary or probable Agreement or Disagreement of the Ideas of which the Extremes in Propositions consist*: I say in these and the like Assertions, if he means by *Ideas* Immediate Ideas which we must have of the *Terms* in every Proposition, and of the *Things* those Terms are us'd to signify, in order to be able to affirm or deny any thing of it, he is mistaken: for there are a great many Propositions whose Truth or Falshood we can demonstrate which contain several Terms or Words which

which are us'd to signify *Things* which we have no immediate Ideas of. For instance, *the Essences of Matter and thinking Substances are incompatibly different in their intrinsic Natures*: One whom this Author is pretty well acquainted with has not been able with all his Wit and Sophistry to evade the force of a Demonstration which has been brought in favour of this Proposition; and yet he must acknowledge that he has no immediate Ideas of its Extremes the *Essences of Matter and thinking Substances*. We must indeed in all Propositions that we assent to know the meaning of the Words; but it does not therefore follow that those *Words* must stand for *things* which we have *Ideas* of: If this were so, then it would follow that as *Ideas are the sole Foundation of our Knowledge and Assent*, so we can assent to nothing which we have not an immediate Idea of: Whereas I have clearly shewn you already that though, in this case, the Foundation is good; yet the Superstructure which is built upon it is precarious and false.

Sect. 4.
P 7, 8, 9,
&c. ad. p.
16.

After having given us an Equivocal *Title*, and assum'd in the three first Sections a false Principle; our Author proceeds to examine what *Qualifications are necessary to make a matter of fact credible upon Human Testimony*: And here he assumes what he laid down in the *Title*,

Title, that our Belief of Reveal'd Religion is founded on the Testimony of Men; which can have no other Foundation unless Miracles were every day wrought for its Confirmation before our Eyes, or that every particular Man had once in his life an immediate Communication from God of all its Divine Truths. And I grant that our Belief that the Scriptures are the Word of God is founded upon Human Testimony corroborated by the collateral Evidences I have already specify'd; but then this is not all that he aims at here; but, as is evident from what he makes requisite to make the things credible which we are requir'd upon Testimony to assent to, he means by our belief of reveal'd Religion, being founded upon human testimony, that we have only Human testimony to support our belief of the Truth of any Propositions in Holy Scriptures. Whereas either the evidence we have, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, is sufficient to satisfy any impartial Mind, that they are so, or it is not: If it is not sufficient, then we are under no Obligation of troubling our heads about any thing contain'd in 'em, as a Revelation of God: But if it is sufficient then, as the evidence which we have from Human Testimony, &c. sufficiently assures us that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God; 'tis as clear as the Light, that the

From Pag.
8. to Pag.
16.

Evidence

Sect. 5. p.
18, 19, 20.

Evidence which we have for the truth of any Proposition in the Holy Scriptures, and which is not discoverable by natural reason, is the *Testimony of God*. I assume, the *Evidence* which we have for the Divine Authority of the Scriptures as *sufficient* here, because he seems to own it himself upon several occasions.

Pag. 8.

These things being clear'd, 'tis evident that of the two Requisites, which he demands, to make the truth of any Proposition credible; viz. *Credibility of Persons*, and *Credibility of Things*; the *Credibility* of the *Persons* whom God Almighty was pleas'd to make use of to deliver the Canon of Scripture to the World (setting aside the Considerations of their Qualifications as to Capacity, Disinterestedness, and the like; which appear, with all possible Advantages, in the Books of Holy Writ) must be ultimately resolv'd into the Veracity of Almighty God, who confirm'd their Doctrine by *Signs following*, as themselves declare: And if we have sufficient Evidence, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, we have sufficient Evidence for the truth of these Declarations, as well as all other particulars, contain'd in the New Testament.

And

And as to the *Credibility of the Things*, in every Proposition which, upon either *Human or Divine Testimony*, requires our assent to the Doctrine which it proposes to be believ'd: *First, we must, and ought to understand the meaning of the Words which it consists of.* Not that every one of those Words must therefore, as he requires, *stand for known Ideas, or Ideas that we are capable of forming*; for we may assent to several Propositions, which contain some Words which stand for Things of which we have no immediate Ideas, upon rational internal Evidence; as for instance, to this Proposition, that *God is absolutely perfect*; though what God is in himself, and what is the real Nature of absolute Perfection, we know by no immediate Ideas at all. And whereas, he says, that *if they stand for Ideas that we know not, or want Faculties to perceive, there are then no Objects for the Mind to exert it self upon*: It does not follow at all: For in this, and all like Propositions, where either the *Subject* or the *Prædicate*, or both, are Words which stand for *things*, which we have no proper Ideas of; we infer the existence of those *things*, from what we have Ideas of; and to those *things* thus inferr'd, we assign Names; and the *things* signify'd by those Names, are so

Pag. 8.

far the Objects of our Mind, as the things we infer 'em from, of which we have immediate Ideas, let us into their Natures. Thus if I am told that *the Essence of matter exists*; though the *Subject* in this Proposition, *viz.* the *Essence of matter* is what I have no immediate Idea at all off, yet as I can infer its existence from things which I have Ideas of, the Attributes which flow from, and depend upon it; I understand more by the Name which I give to this *Support* of those Attributes, than a *meer Sound, without signification*, in conceiving the Word *Essence* (when apply'd to matter) to stand for something, which is the *Support* of *Solidity, Mobility, Divisibility*, and the like, which I have immediate Ideas of: Whereby though it is not *immediately* an Object for my Mind to exert it self upon, yet it is so *mediately*; and that by the Mediation of those Ideas from which I infer its existence, and so much of its Nature as they inform me of.

Page 8, 9,
10.

Secondly, says he, *The Words must stand for those Ideas which the use of Language has appropriated them to, or for what the Author, or Relator says he understands by them, or for what the visible design of the Author, or Relator determines them to signify: And if we can't find out the meaning of a Man's Words,*
by

by comparing him with himself, by the use of the Language in which he writes, or by his particular Definitions; it is all one to the Reader or Hearer, as if the Words stood for Ideas he knew nothing of: — The Mind is left without an Object. Indeed with relation to Words standing either for Ideas which we have not Faculties to perceive, or for Ideas that we have Faculties to perceive, without knowing what those Ideas are, a man is capable of these actions of his mind, of believing that those Words stand for Ideas, and that the Ideas signify'd by them, have a relation to one another; but in performing these actions of the mind, a man goes not one step beyond his Ideas. This he tells us visibly falls in with what he made requisite in the first place, to the Credibility of a relation or story; so that in what he says here, he does but explain his meaning more at large in the first requisite to the Credibility of things, whose evidence depends upon Human Testimony: Which I have shewn (in the case of both Human and Divine Testimony) to be, that we understand the meaning of the Words which a Proposition consists of, which requires our assent to the Doctrine it contains: as the second is, that those Words in their obvious Construction, involve no Contradiction. In the end of the Paragraph, from whence I have cited these passages, he tells us, that he had not been so particular upon this point, but that the mis-

Pag. 10.

apprehensions about this matter, have been the occasion of a great deal of wrangling in the Controversy of Mysteries. Hence we may conclude, that the main strength of what he has to say against the *Credibility of Mysteries*; lies in this Paragraph: I shall therefore set this first requisite to the *Credibility of the thing* in its true light; and then shew the falsity of his representation of the matter; or if it is in any sense true, that in that sense it does not at all affect the *Credibility of Mysteries*.

Now in order to set this first requisite to the *Credibility of the thing contain'd in a Proposition, whose Evidence depends upon Human or Divine Testimony*, in its true light; we must consider, that the truth contain'd in that Proposition may be what we are requir'd to assent to, either as to its *existence*, and the relation it has to us; or as to the manner of its existence also, or its *real modus*. When the latter is requir'd, 'tis plain, that we can assent to nothing which we do not understand, and that as clearly as the party who communicates it; for otherwise we pretend to understand what we understand not; for instance, if I am requir'd to assent to the truth of this Proposition, that *the surface of a Sphere is equal to four times the area of one of its great Circles*, and if I am not only requir'd to believe that it is so, but to believe that

that I know *how* it comes to be so; I can't believe it, unless I know how to demonstrate it; for the Demonstration only teaches me *how* it comes to be so: And to require me to say I know *how* it comes to be so, when I know not *how* it comes to be so, is an absurd and unreasonable Demand. But when the former is requir'd only, we may assent to the *existence* or *truth* of a thing; though after what *manner* it *exists*, or *how* it comes to be *true*, we know not. Thus a practical Geometer may assent to the truth of this Proposition, that the *three Angles of a right-lined Triangle are equal to two right Angles*, upon the testimony of the Mathematicians; and to the relation it has in plain *Trigonometry*, to the taking of heights, depths, and distances, &c. though *how* this *Theorem* comes to be true, or how to demonstrate it, he knows no more, then how to deduce the most abstruse parts of any one branch of the Mathematics from their first Principles. And when we are required to assent to a *truth*, with the *relation it has to us*, though *how* it comes to be true we know not; or when we are requir'd to believe the *existence* of a *thing*, with its *reference to us*, without knowing any thing, and consequently without being oblig'd to believe any thing particular concerning the *manner* of its *existence*: That *truth* or *thing*, whose *existence* we are re-

quir'd to assent to, may be either, *first*, what we do not understand in the *manner* of its *existence*, because we apply not our selves to understand it, though we have Faculties adequate to it upon due application. Or, *secondly*, it may be what some particular persons can't understand upon the greatest application, by reason of some defects in their own Faculties, though it is clear to all Mankind who labour not under those defects. And in either of these cases, *Human Authority*, or *Testimony* is a reasonable ground of assent. Or, *thirdly*, it may be what in the *manner* of its *existence* is above the comprehension of Mankind in general, 'till our Faculties are alter'd and improv'd in a future state. And in this case, *Divine Testimony* is the only reasonable ground of our assent. I have given you an instance of the *first case* already, in the case of a practical Geometer's assenting, upon the *Testimony* of the *Mathematicians*, to any *Theorem* in *Euclid*; He beleives it true upon their *Testimony*; and he may find it to be so himself, if he will use his best Endeavours to understand the Demonstration. If a Man that sees can inform a Man born blind of the *existence* of *Light* and *Colours*, and of the relation they have to those that see; and the blind Man may reasonably assent upon that Information; It will be an instance of the *second*. And if God Almighty

mighty may inform us of the *Existence* and reference had to us, of the *Mysteries* of *Christianity*, and we may reasonably assent to *them* upon that Information. It will be an Instance of the *third*.

Now I will grant with our Author, that if a Man possess'd of the Sense of *Seeing*, tells a Man born *blind*, that, by the use of his Eyes, he is able to *see* that his Face is *white* or *red*; he had as good tell him that he is able to *Blictri*, that his Face is *Con-* Pag 9.
sheda or *Coshedanaim*; or any other hard Names; from whence he has no better Notions of the Colour of his Face, than his Brother *Blind-man* had of *Scarlet*, who compar'd it to the *Sound* of a *Trumpet*. A Man that goes this way to work with a blind Man, had as good hold his peace, because in this method of proceeding, he supposes the Man to see, though he is stark blind, and to have Ideas or Sensations, which he will never have 'till his Eyes are open'd. But is there no other way of acquainting the blind Man with the *Existence* of *Light* and *Colours*, and and the *relation* they have to those that *see*? This must be try'd. And here 'tis plain, that as they have no Ideas in common, from which he can give the blind Man such a *Sensation* as he has himself of these Qualities, if he will give him any Notions at all of

their *Existence*, and the *Relation* they have to those that see, he must make use of such Words and Ideas for this purpose, as they have in common; and which bear the nearest *Analogy* or *Similitude*, to those Operations by which the Sensations of Light and Colours are occasion'd in himself, or to the effects which are the result of his being possess'd of the Sense of seeing: He may tell him then, that what occasions in himself these Sensations is a vast quantity of streams of minute Bodies, proceeding from a Mass of matter of the same kind, at a vast distance, call'd the Sun; that these streams of minute Bodies consist of a Collection of infinite Rays; which he may *analogize* by *Hairs* or *Threads*, acquainting him withal, that they are vastly finer than what he represents 'em by; that these Rays being reflected from the Surfaces of Bodies, fall upon his Eyes, and enable him (as it were) to *feel* them, though at remote distances, with their comparative Magnitudes, Figures, Situation, &c. and to distinguish them one from another, by these helps, and the different appearances of their Surfaces: The former he may illustrate by the *blind Man's* perceiving Bodies at some distance from himself, by the help of his Stick; and I know no better way, by which he can *analogize* Colours, than by the different

rent Operations of Solids and Fluids, the rough or smooth Surfaces of Bodies by which he distinguishes them one from another, either *immediately*, or by the mediation of his Stick. And does the blind Man know no more by this *analogical* Description of the *Existence* of Light and Colours, and the *relation* they have to those that see, than if he were told that his Face is *white* or *red*? And can he infer no more from his Discourse than in that case, *that from the Integrity of the Person he converses with, he believes something is signify'd by that Word, and that that meaning has a relation to his Face*? 'Tis true, the blind Man has from all this, no Notion at all what Light and Colours are, in the Sensations of the Man that sees: But he is hence clearly satisfy'd of the *Existence* of *some things*, which inable the Man that converses with him, to distinguish Bodies, with their magnitude Figure, Situation, &c. and the different appearances of their Surfaces, &c. at vastly greater distances, &c. than he can with his Hands or Stick: And the *Existence*, and *Relation*, which these things have to those that see, he infers reasonably from the Integrity of the Person he converses with. To go to tell him directly, that by the use of your Eyes, you *see* that his Face is *white* or *red* (as our Author puts the Case) is impertinence

pertinence and nonsense, if you design to convince him of the *Existence* of Light and Colours, and of the *Relation* they have to those that see: But then if you take the Method I have now laid down, or any other *analogical* way, in which no Words or Ideas are made use of, but what are common to him and your self, you will attain your end; and upon your unquestion'd Integrity, he will be convinc'd, that there are such things *existent* as Light and Colours, which though he has no Notion of, as they are in your Sensations, yet he finds that they have such and such Relations to you, and inable you to do such and such things out of his Power for want of the use of his Eyes. From things of which, he has Ideas, as your Integrity, and the *analogical* *Semblances* you make use of, he infers the Existence, Relations, &c. of things of which he has no Ideas. And thus have you an Instance of the *second Case* laid down in the precedent Section: Where a thing you see evidently may reasonably be assented to, as to its *Existence*, and the *Relation it has to us*, by a Person, who (by reason of some defects in this or that particular Sense or Faculty) can never be brought to apprehend *what* it is, or the manner of its Existence: And this upon no greater Authority, than *Human Testimony*.

And

And for an Instance in the third Case, If you conceive that all the World were blind, and God Almighty making use of the *Analogies* now laid down to acquaint us with the Existence of Light and Colours, and with the relation they would have to us, if we could see: You can't deny but that we might reasonably assent as far upon his *Testimony*, as the blind Man does upon his *Neighbours*, that is, to the Existence, Relations, &c. of *some things*, whose manner of Existence we have no Notion of: Whereas this is all that we are requir'd to do in the case of the *Mysteries* of Christianity; as you must see from what I have already said upon this Subject; and the reasonableness of our assenting in these cases, is not only evident from what I have said now; but from what I have demonstrated in its proper place, under my third general head.

And now, has our Author put the Cases about the *first* Requisite, to the *Credibility of the thing*, as fairly as he ought to have done? If you compare what he has said, with my state of the Case, you must confess that, in the Paragraph which I last cited, he has done no such thing. He does not distinguish Propositions which contain Truths which we are requir'd to assent to, upon Testimony as to their *Existence*, and *Relations*, &c. from

from such as we are requir'd fully to understand in all respects, or to assent to, as to their *Existence, Relations, and Real modus*: But requires in general the same Requisites, to the Credibility of the thing, in the former as in the latter Case; which you see from what I have now offer'd, is unreasonable and unjust. In the former Case (for instance) he requires that we have perfectly the same Ideas of the Words made use of in a Proposition, which is design'd upon Testimony, to deliver a Truth, as to its *Existence and Relations*, as the Party has who communicates this Proposition, and requires our assent to it in these Respects: Whereas you see this is not necessary; but that either God or Man may use these *Words*, to express things by *Analogy*, which we cou'd have no information of directly without an alteration of our Faculties; and in this case, 'tis not requisite to know what *Analogy* those words bear to what the Author makes use of them to *analogize*, or to have the same Ideas of them in all respects, as the Author has himself; for then we must know the *Real modus* of the Truth which the Author would communicate only as to its *Existence and Relations*: But 'tis sufficient that we know what Ideas appertain to these Words in their obvious meaning, and that in this meaning they do but *analogically* teach us the

the Existence, &c. of something, which we can't be brought acquainted with, in our present Circumstances, as to the *manner of its Existence*. This is evident from what I have but now prov'd. And this he slips over in the Paragraph he lays so much stress upon, and consequently leaves the real Controversy about *Mysteries*, absolutely in the lurch. The Words made use of upon these Occasions, are such as we have Ideas of in common with the Party we have to do with, and therein are such, whose meaning we do perceive; but in this meaning they do but *Typically*, and by *Analogy*, acquaint us with the Existence, &c. of what we want Faculties to perceive, as to the *real manner of its Existence*. And as to what he says about a blind Man's being told that his Face is white, or red, by which he understands no more, than if he was told his Face was *Cousheda*; unless it be this, that from the Integrity of the Person he converses with, he believes something is signify'd by that Word, and that that meaning has a relation to his Face: In performing which Actions of the Mind, a Man goes not one step beyond his Ideas. His Reader must be very weak, if he is impos'd upon by this, as the real case of *Mysteries*. I have shewn the ridiculousness of it already, and how wide it is from being a just Parallel in the present case. Let him prove, if he can, that a blind

a blind Man can't be taught by *Analogical Simblances* the *Existence* of *Light* and *Colours*, and the relation they have to those that see ; and therein take such a step beyond his Ideas, as from Things of which he has Ideas to infer what he has no Ideas of ; and he will do something. This is the Case of *Mysteries* : And till he proves this impracticable or unreasonable, he may *mitigate* against *Mysteries* as long as he pleases ; but 'twill be absolutely to no purpose in the Eyes of all impartially considering Men,

You may see now upon what Account it is that our Author assumes the Evidence we have for the Truth of each Proposition in Scripture to be no other than *human Testimony* : Even because *human Testimony* is not a sufficient *Basis* whereon to build a reasonable Assent to the *Mysteries* of *Christianity* strictly so call'd. For if all Mankind had been born blind one Man could not have reveal'd the *Existence* of *Light* and *Colours*, &c. to another in the same Circumstances, under any *Simblances* whatever unless they were communicated to him under those *Simblances* by a Being that *saw* ; or by the Supreme Being who is *all-seeing*. No more cou'd any Man reveal the *Mysteries* of God unless they were first reveal'd to him by God : and consequently the Belief of 'em
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can be supported by no less than *Divine Testimony*. Our Author does not apply his Assumption directly to this purpose, because it must have put him upon disproving the *Divine Authority* of the Scriptures: but he lays down their mere *Human Authority* as a *Postulatum*, and leaves his Reader to infer the Unreasonableness of Assenting to *Mysteries* from that Position assum'd

And now (Sir) having shewn that what our Author calls his first Two Requisites to the *Credibility of Things* is not in all respects Justifiable in the Case of *Mysteries*; but that it is only then requir'd when we are not only to know that a Thing *exists*, but to be acquainted with the *manner* of its *Existence*: and consequently having made it appear that what he lays so much stress upon in the Case of *Mysteries* is nothing to the purpose: I must pass over his *Third Requisite*, only with this Remark that the Subject Pag. 11,
12, 13, 14,
15. Matter of it might have been spar'd had it not been for some ill Design: We grant that we can't believe Contradictions, and he knows it very well. But from his beating the Air so very solemnly for Three Leaves together he may hope to persuade some body that we hold the contrary; and bring 'em to discard all *Mysteries* upon that false Persuasion without Examination.

He

Pag. 16. He proceeds in the 5th Section to say,
thus it appears that these qualifications are necessary to make a matter of Fact credible upon any Testimony whatever: tho' he has pretended to prove it only upon Human Testimony; and is far from having prov'd that too, in the Case of Mysteries, in what he makes the two former Requisites to the Credibility of the Thing. In this 5th Section, if what has been said will not prove our Incapacity of assenting with Reason to the *Mysteries of Christianity*, he is for finding out such a Sense of 'em as is agreeable to the discoveries of our Reason, if the Words under any kind of Construction will bear it, tho' at first view they may seem repugnant to Reason and one another. And he produces several Passages out of Scripture to Justify this Conduct, wherein God Almighty expresses himself *αὐτοπαροπαθῶς*, and speaks of his own Operations, &c. by Analogy to the Actions and Passions of Mankind, which literally understood must be false, and therefore must be taken in such a Construction as will render 'em agreeable to the discoveries of our Reason, and consistent with other Passages in Holy Scripture. Now the modes of Operation of God Almighty are as much *Mysteries* to us as the mode of Existence of the *Trine Distinction* in the Divine Essence, or any other of the *Mysteries of Christianity* strictly so call'd; and hence it

Pag. 17.
 Pag. 18,
 19.

is that the former are represented to us under *analogical Simblances* as well as the later: And as our natural Reason tells us, as well as the Scriptures, that *God is a Spirit*; hence it is that we are oblig'd to accommodate such Expressions as he instances in to such Notions of God as both Scripture and Reason inform us of; hence it is that we find those Expressions to be only *analogically* representative of what we can't at present be brought acquainted with as to its *real modus*: And hence it is also that we look upon the Expressions of *Father* and *Son*, *only begotten of the Father*, &c. as *analogically* representative of such a *Distinction* in the *Divinity*, as cannot be in him in any such way as those Expressions literally understood imply; nor in any way inconsistent with the Unity of the Deity: Thus far we may and must use our Reason in adjusting the *Mysteries* of our Faith; Thus far we must *make use of common Sense* whereby to adjust the several popular Expressions in Scripture to the *Maxims* of Reason and Philosophy: And this because we can't believe Contradictions to be true, which several passages in Scripture literally taken would put us upon. But it is one thing so to adjust matters that we believe not Contradictions; and another never to leave adjusting them 'till we have made them agreeable to the discoveries of our Reason, or 'till

P.19.

P.17.

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we have left nothing to be believ'd but what we can comprehend. The former Practice is warrantable and necessary ; but the latter, as is evident from what I have said in Defence of the Credibility of *Mysteries*, (as we must never depart from the obvious Interpretation of Scripture without just Reason) is unreasonable and absurd.

P. 20, 21. In the Sixth Section, if nothing that he has hitherto said will do the business, he is for rejecting the passages which contain the *Mysteries of Christianity* ; as he conceives *they can't be suppos'd to come from God, but rather must be presum'd to have been added to the Text, out of some particular Views and Designs, &c.* But (as in this and the last Section he proceeds upon *Mysteries* and *Contradictions* as *synonymous Terms*, which he knows we deny) as long as the Nature of God and the next World are *Mysteries* to us, though we mean nothing less by the Word than he does in his *contradictory* Dress, and as long as it concerns us to know their *Existence* and the *Relation* they have to us, and God Almighty may reveal them to us, and we may rationally assent to them, as I have already prov'd ; he will find it difficult to prove it reasonable rather to *allegorize* the whole *Covenant of Grace* as propos'd in the New Testament than to assent to it in its ob-

obvious Sense, when no Reason can be given for such treatment. And as for his expunging work, if the rejection of *Mysteries* occasion it, he had as good expunge the whole New Testament as this or that passage or part; for we have the best *Human Authority*. for such passages coming from God as deliver the *Mysteries* of our Religion as well as for the rest. And whoever is for expunging any passages without Reason, may by a Parity of Reason reject the whole. As for his *particular Views and Designs* they are as malicious as they are precarious. And when he attempts to prove that all the passages which contain the very *Nature* of the *Christian Covenant* have upon these *Views and Designs* been added to the Text, we shall try whether what he offers can't be answer'd.

Having laid down, says he, the use of Reason in things whose Evidence depends upon Human Testimony, I shall consider the principal Objections that may be urged against what I have deliver'd; and I can't do that more effectually than by examining the several Senses put on the famous Distinction of things above, and things contrary to Reason: For 'tis chiefly by Virtue of that Distinction that the Divines militate in behalf of *Mysteries* and Contradictions, against those who say they can only

Sect. 7.
p. 23.

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believe

believe that which they can understand. That is, "having shewn (if what has pass'd is "any thing to the purpose) that we can't "assent to the Doctrin contain'd in any Pro- "position as to its *Existence*, and the *Relation* "it has to us, upon the Testimony of either "God or Man, unless we understand or "comprehend it in its *real modus*; I come "to shew the unreasonableness of the Divines in asserting the contrary Doctrin. But as the precedent part of this undertaking is what you clearly see he has not accomplish'd at all, nor said any thing to the purpose about; so the latter part is what he must attack in another Book if he will speak to the purpose; for upon a comparison of what I have already offer'd with what follows in his piece you may easily see, that he has said nothing to the purpose in this. Before he proceeds to this latter part

P. 23, 24. of his Undertaking he tells us he will *briefly lay down the Distinction of Propositions one from another as they are the Objects of our assent or dissent*. And here he says that *Propositions however offer'd to us consisting of Terms which stand for Ideas and their Relations, we assent when the Relations between the Ideas join'd are agreeable to Reason, and dissent when they are contrary to Reason*. But if he say this a thousand times over without any proof it will do no more real Service to the Cause he

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militates in behalf of than perfect silence. It will still be true, for any thing he shews to the contrary, that we have Knowledge properly so call'd in several cases, without Ideas of the Objects it relates to; and that we may assent to several Truths where we infer what we want Ideas of from what we have Ideas of. And whereas he says that *in all Cases the Assent should follow the Perception of the Agreement of Ideas, as the Dissent should follow the Repugnancy of Ideas*; and thence infers that *all Propositions consider'd as Objects of Assent or Dissent are adequately divided into Propositions agreeable or contrary to Reason*: Let this be granted; but then of Propositions agreeable to reason which are the Objects of our Assent, some may be such as we comprehend in all respects, as to their *Existence* (for instance) and *real modus*; as this, that *similar Solids are in a triplicate Ratio to their Homologous Sides*; and some may be such as we comprehend as to their *Existence*, and the *Relation they have to us*, but which are incomprehensible in our present state as to the *manner of their Existence*; as this, that *God is*; or this, that *great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the Flesh*; The former of these two last Propositions I hope this Gentleman won't deny to be a Proposition which agreeably to Reason we must assent to, though what that God is in his

P. 24.

intrinsic Nature whose Existence it asserts, I can scarce believe he will undertake to determine : Whence it follows that the Distinction I have given of two sorts of Propositions which are *agreeable to Reason*, and justly the Objects of our Assent holds good. And in the latter of these *Senses* all the Propositions which contain the *Mysteries of Christianity* are *agreeable to Reason*, and justly the Objects of our Assent ; as I have already prov'd, and I think in such a way as nothing in his elaborate Performance can invalidate, If he will quibble here, and say that by Propositions *agreeable to Reason*, he means such the *real modus* of whose Truth we *adequately* comprehend ; his instance of *Christ's Resurrection* destroys this Evasion, unless he can shew us the *real modus* how this great Work was effected : Besides that Propositions are not only the Objects of our Assent as *agreeable to Reason* in this Sense of the Phrase, but it is often *agreeable to Reason* to assent to their *Existence*, though we know nothing at all of the *manner how they exist*, as I think I have sufficiently prov'd.

From p.
25. to 43.

As to his Quarrel in the nineteen following Pages, with the common Distinction of *Things above, and Things contrary to Reason*, I am not concern'd with it ; and therefore shall not give my self the trouble to take it into
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Examination. His Design is therein to insinuate that no Propositions in any respect *above reason* can upon whatever *Testimony*, in any other respect, however *agreeable to reason*, be the Objects of our Assent. I say this is his Design if it is to the purpose in the Controversy before us. Whereas I have directly demonstrated the contrary; and that of Propositions *agreeable to reason*, and which are justly the Objects of our Assent; some may be such as we comprehend in all respects; as to their *Existence*, *Relations*, and *Real modus*; and some may be such as we comprehend as to their *Existence*, and some particular *Relations*, but which as to their *real modus* we comprehend not at all. Let him disprove this if he can; And then he will do his Fellow-*Mystery-haters* a considerable piece of Service.

When he says that *whatever exists which* ^{P.29.} *falls not within the compass of our Ideas is nothing to us, nor can we talk or think about it; and that whenever the manner or Physical Cause of a thing is unknown we can frame no Propositions about it; nothing remains as an Object for us upon which to exert our Assent or Dissent:* And when he says, that *though be.* ^{P.30.} *yond dispute, a great many things exist of which we have no Idea; yet Ideas and Acts of the Mind being relative, there can be no Act of the Mind where there is no Idea, or no Ob-*
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ject: 'Tis evidently his Design to impose upon us this Sophism, that *Inasmuch as Ideas are the sole Foundation of our Knowledge and Assent; therefore we can know, or assent to nothing (in any respect) which we have no Idea of*: Or else what he says makes nothing at all against the Credibility of the *Mysteries of the Christian Faith*. Whereas this Inference is false: And we can from things of which we have Ideas infer the *Existence*, &c. of things of which we have no Ideas as I have already prov'd. 'Tis in this way that we come by the demonstration of several Truths discoverable by Natural Reason; and thus we are requir'd to argue in Divine Matters whose *real modus* is out of our reach. And 'till he shews that this is an irrational Method of proceeding in the Controversy of *Mysteries* he does little better than beat the Air.

P. 37.

V. Gastrel's
Confiderations
on the
Trinity &c.

In his Remarks upon Dr. Gastrel, which the Doctor has since answer'd, without any Reply that I have met with; he questions the Doctor's Capacity for saying that *Identity is nothing else but a Repetition of Unity, as Number is of Difference*. I have nothing to do to examine the Doctor's Definition of either. But is his own Definition of *Identity* just? He says it consists in this, that the Ideas it is attributed to, or for which the Term stands, vary not at all from what they were

were that moment wherein we consider their former Existence, and to which we compare the present. This is indeed to construe a Word, or to shew what he means by the Term *Identity*, and that's all. And perhaps this may be enough for him; for there are some who write time after time in Defence of such *Hypotheses* as allow even *Personal Identity* in the Idea, and as a Name; but as to any thing of reality in it make it a mere *ens rationis*, and Chimerical Fiction.

V. Clark's
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fence of
an Argu-
ment
made use
of in a
Letter to
Mr. Dod-
well, &c.

Some Divines in their Defenses of the reasonableness of our assenting to the *Mysteries* of *Christianity*, take occasion (from their being urg'd with the difficulties which seem to attend the admission of these Doctrines as Truths) to shew that there are a great many Truths in Nature, and demonstrable by unassisted Human Reason, which yet are attended with several seemingly very difficult and strange Consequences; but are not therefore rejected as Falshoods, in opposition to Demonstration, upon these accounts. In the Method I have taken I am not oblig'd to enter into this Dispute: For as I have shewn that the account we have of the *Mysteries* of *Christianity* in the New Testament is *Figurative* and *Analogical*, and consequently what gives us not as much as any partial Conceptions of the *real modus* of any one My-

P. 41, 42.
&c. ad fi-
nem.

Mystery at all; 'tis plain that as we know nothing at all of the *real Nature* of that *Distinction* in the Godhead which is *analogically* deliver'd in the Terms *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and which we call (*analogically* also) a *Distinction of Persons or Personalities*; I say, as we have not hence the least partial Conceptions what this *Distinction* really is, we can't assign any real strange Consequences attending a Supposition of its Existence, without making 'em strange Consequences of we know not what, we know not why. And the same may be said for the other *Christian Mysteries* deliver'd in the New Testament. However I can't but remark how our Author deals with those Gentlemen who shew that there are several demonstrated Truths which are attended with several seemingly very puzzling Consequences: He calls Dr. Edwards's *unanswerable Objections, Paradoxes, and Absurdities, which confound the imagination to conceive, CONTRADICTIONS*; tho' from what he cites out of the Dr's Book he can't Justly infer that any such thing is meant: Indeed the Word *Absurdity* made use of by the Dr. sounds something harshly; but had it not been there, *unanswerable Objections* and *Paradoxes* might possibly have been converted into *Contradictions* still: Our Author knows a Gentleman who has made such

such a Conversion of Mr. Clark's Expressions, tho' he speaks as Justly and accurately upon the abstrusest Subjects as any Person I ever met with : and I don't question but he has read his Observations on such Conduct in the Book now cited.

V. Clark's
Third De-
fence, &c.
Pag. 80,
81, 82.

I deny (says our Author) that, if we examine carefully, any Contradiction, or Absurdity follows from a demonstrated Proposition, and affirm that where-ever we have capacity enough to perceive the truth of a Proposition we have capacity enough to perceive that there is no repugnancy between that and another Proposition. And I deny this too: And every one else must do so who considers that to do otherwise comes at last to the warranting of the truth of this FIRST CONTRADICTION, that a thing may be and not be at the same time, and in the same respect. And I think I cou'd plainly shew (says he) that those Mathematical and Physical Instances might be sol'd, did men but consider sufficiently the Ideas of their minds, for of them only truth consists, and think precisely on 'em. What he means here by truth consisting only of the Ideas in our minds, is as unintelligible to me as some Definitions of Identity and Number are to him; unless he would have truth to be as chimerical a thing as his own Definition seems

Pag. 43,
44.

Fig. 28.

to make *Identity*. But 'tis as clear as the Light that where we have but partial Conceptions of things we may demonstrate several Truths within the reach of what Conceptions we have; and it may proceed from our not having those things in a full View, or total Conceptions of 'em, that we may be perplex'd with seemingly strange Consequences, and Difficulties that can't perfectly be clear'd. He owns himself that *we have very few adæquate Ideas of things*; he seems there to mean of things about us, and of a finite Nature; and if not of finite, it holds thence a *Fortiori* against infinite; and we can demonstrate several truths relating to both *Finites* and *Infinities* of which we have but *inadæquate Ideas*; every Philosopher and Mathematician is so well acquainted with this that 'tis needless to produce Instances; and several of those demonstrated Truths seem to be attended with strange Consequences, because we have but partial Conceptions, or *inadequate Ideas* of the Objects they relate to.

Fig. 45.

He calls our Inability to solve these Consequences *that absurd State which the Clergy would put us into, and that sceptical one which is the direct Consequence of their Opinions*. And it is indeed an absurd State, and a sceptical one too, whoever puts us into
into

into it, in his *contradictory dress*; but otherwise, as all the Clergy that I have met with express it, a *State of Imperfection*; and such an one too as God Almighty thought fit to create us in.

But he will undertake to solve all these Pag. 44
difficult Consequences if we will but give him *intelligible Definitions of the words*; that is, If we will but make his *inadequate Conceptions adequate Conceptions*. We can't pretend to do it; for *nil dat quod non habet*: What Definitions we can give him of the Words must be consonant to what Ideas we have of the things they stand for; but in most of the Cases where these *difficult Consequences* are met with we have no Immediate proper Ideas at all as in the Case of the Attributes of God, &c. but from things; of which we have Ideas pick up by Inference some partial Notions of what we have no immediate adequate Ideas of; and to the best Conceptions we can form in these Cases we assign Names; which if we *define* it must be according to our partial Conceptions, and not to what we have no Ideas of the real Natures of the things themselves. Or if he means by *Intelligible Definitions* such as we can frame from our partial Conceptions; to pretend to account fully for what he must

must own upon this Hypothesis, he knows but in part, is worthy of him and consonant to his Conduct in the latter part of this Piece; but still 'tis a *Contradiction*: a *Term* and *Thing* he so much delights in.

Page 44.

*What causes the Difficulty (says he) is, that the Term Infinite is suppos'd to stand for some something incomprehensible, whereas Infinity ought, like all other Words in our Language, to have a determin'd Idea fix'd to it when us'd in a Proposition; and not to stand for any thing existing, anyfarther than it has a Conformity to our Idea; and consequently the Term Infinity should stand for an Idea which we can as well comprehend as the Number Three, or the Colour Red. The contrary seems to me to amount to this great Absurdity, that when we use the Term Infinity we have a Meaning or Idea to it, and have not a Meaning to it: this well attended to would clear those Instances from the charge of Absurdity. From the Charge of inexplicable Difficulties he means. Whereas what causes these Difficulties (about *Infinities* for Instance) is not the Terms standing for something incomprehensible, but the Incomprehensibility of the things themselves. And if the Term *Infinite* is us'd to signify a determin'd Idea, that can't be an Idea of *Infinity* as it is in it self, but*

But such an Idea as we can compound
 from our partial Conceptions of it : o-
 otherwise our *Finite* Faculties may ade-
 quately comprehend what is *Infinite*, which
 will make *Finite* and *Infinite* too nearly
 related. And if we attend never so much
 to what determin'd Idea we can fix the
 Word *Infinity* to, which we form from
 what partial Conceptions we have of it,
 it will hardly enable us throughly to ex-
 plain what we don't fully comprehend :
 For at best we can make the Word stand
 for what we comprehend but in part.
 Or if we will be so trifling as to make it
 stand for something which we have as
 complete an Idea of as of the Colour *Red*,
 altering the Signification of the Word will
 will not bring us one Jot nearer a Capa-
 city of either comprehending or explaining
 the Thing, which we still conceive but
 very imperfectly, and which that Word
 stood for heretofore : Unless the Natures
 of Things depend for their Reality upon
 our Fancies ; which what our Author says
 in all this latter Part of his Book would
 tempt one to believe to be a Conceit that
 he is not a little fond of. As to the Ab-
 surdity he is so frighted at, that if we
 don't make the Word *Infinity* to stand for
 an Idea which we adequately comprehend,
 when we use the *Term* we seem to have a
 Mean-

Meaning, and not to have a Meaning to it ; It vanishes if we make the Word signify the best Conceptions we can frame of what it stands for, though the Thing it self be incomprehensible to us in its own Nature.

Pag. 45,
46, 47,
&c.

But he has try'd for a Specimen, to reconcile God Almighty's *Præscience* with the *Liberty of Man*, and to account for all the strange Consequences, which seem to follow from that great Truth. And that in such a way as not only destroys Man's *Liberty*, but discards God of his *Being* ; to make short work on't. If this is not in effect taking a great deal of Pains to reconcile a couple of *Nothings*, 'twill be difficult to discover what is.

Pag. 51,
52, 53,
&c. ad fi-
nem.

Pag. 51.

For a Second Specimen of his New Talent, he attempts to make all the seemingly strange Consequences which appear to follow from the best Notions we can frame of *Eternity* to fly before him : These Difficulties (*Inconsistences* he calls 'em) *charg'd on the Attribute of Eternity*, are (says he) *on the Consequences of our Idea of it*. That is, What Difficulties attend our best Notions of *Eternity* are not owing to the thing it self, but to our inadequate Conceptions of it ; which is true : Or else he may mean

mean that they are the Consequences of our not making the Word *Eternity* to stand for a determinate Idea ; and therefore he construes the Word in his Sense of it ; and tells us that by *Eternity* he understands, *An Idea of Duration, to which it is repugnant to assign a Beginning or End.* Now the difficult Consequences which attend the best Notions we can frame of *Eternity* don't arise from our not making the Word stand for a determinate Idea, but from our inadequate Conceptions of the Thing ; which inadequate Conceptions (if he will) we form into an imperfect Idea, and give that Idea a Name. Hence the Divines deduce the Origin of these Difficulties : and when he will undertake to prove that his Definition gives us an adequate Idea of the Thing, if I can't shew him that he is mistaken, I will grant readily that he may upon good Grounds *undertake to resolve all the Difficulties attending it.* Pag. 44.

I am,

S I R,

Yours, &c.—

ERRATA MAJORA.

Page 13. Line 27, dele *not*.

P. 37. l. 24. after *assent* put a Comma.

P. 42. l. 29. after *into* insert *in*.

P. 80. put *Pag. 51, 52, &c.* in the Margin to the Beginning of the last Section in the Page; and *Pag. 51* single to the Italic after it.

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